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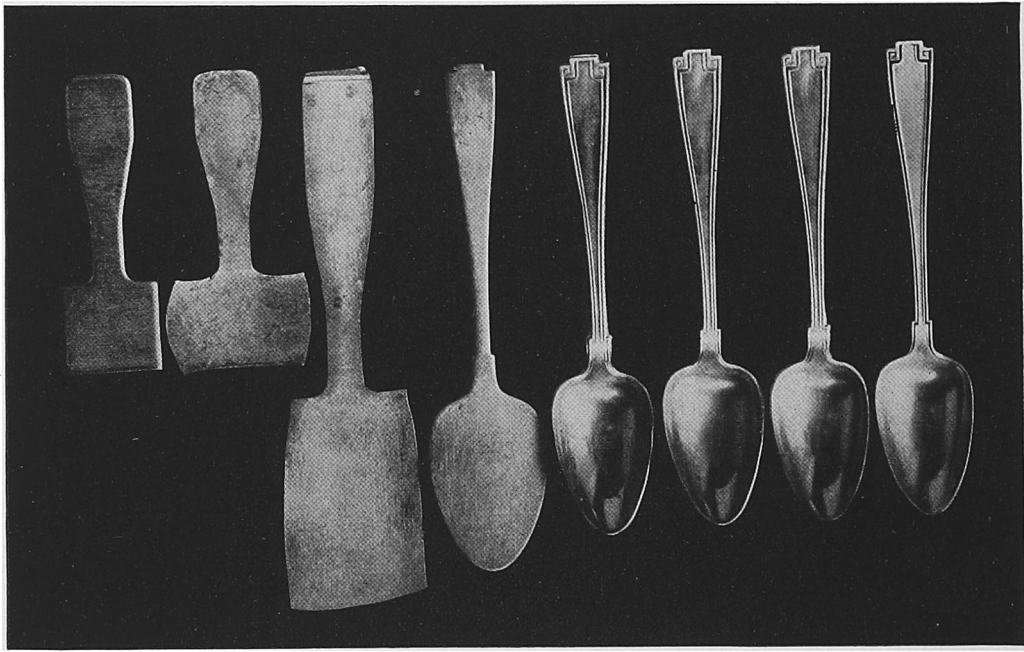
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THE EVOLUTION OF THE SPOON

## THE MAKING OF THE SPOON

BY W. FRANK PURDY

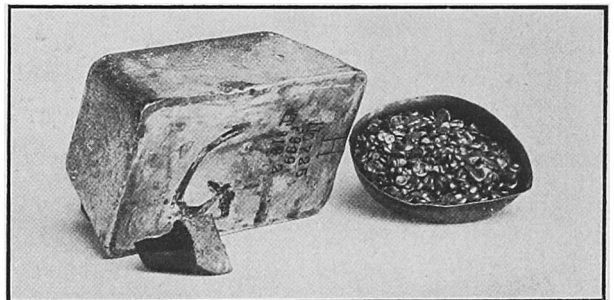
**I**T is a fact that in no field of the silversmithing art has the superiority of the American designer and silversmith, in the quality and variety that he has produced, been so clearly demonstrated as in the designing and making of spoons, forks, knives—commonly known in the trade as “flatware.” The many familiar designs embody the best of all periods from the old “Kings” pattern upward and downward, through the many varying patterns suggested by important periods in the history of our country and parent countries—possibly more often that of England than of others—as well as inspirations from the flora of our fields, gardens, and forests. Truly the American artist designer has created an endless variety for his patrons from which to choose.

There are probably twenty manufacturers today in America who show in their “lines” from one hundred to one hundred and fifty separate and distinct beautiful designs—each one suitable for cottage or palace, as the demand may be, and all the intermediate needs of the public or consumer. In the methods employed, and in the creation of the necessary dies and tools for producing and reproducing these patterns, the American manufacturer has been as prodigal in his initial outlay as he is in the choice of the finished product which he can offer his public. This present prodigious effort to please and tempt and satisfy the eye and desires of a most fastidious and progressive taste is absolutely unparalleled in the history of this art—for indeed art it is when compared with the methods of the more conservative foreign producers.

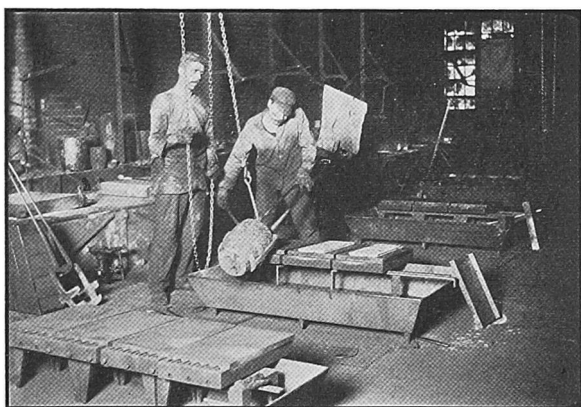
The first and perhaps the most interesting phase in the development of this modern romance of flatware, and one which should not be overlooked, is the preliminary training of the artist artisans who create the original designs. Usually receiving some primary instruction in practical craftsmanship and the technical workshop limitations at the shop where

the work is executed, they later attend schools of applied art for their real and equally necessary artistic training. Here these craftsmen are given access to all the best in art and design that has gone before, even, in many instances, to the extent of having their expenses paid for travel through, and study in, the great art centers of the world. These artist craftsmen then come back to the designing room of their parent organizations not only with head, heart, and hand crammed with knowledge and skill—now artistic as well as technical, but with a desire to serve both employer and public that is as unique and commendable as it is specially gratifying to those of us who sincerely believe that the practical arts can be “fine arts” as well.

The first step in the actual manufacture of our flatware consists in the creation of innumerable drawings based fundamentally on the teaspoon. These original drawings are submitted for criticism and suggestion to the head of the designing room. Meetings are then held by representatives of the interested departments, including the selling force of the organization, to determine which designs shall be adopted. These approved designs are next cut in soft steel dies or striking patterns, from which preliminary soft wax impressions are taken for a final



SILVER BRICK AND COPPER ALLOY



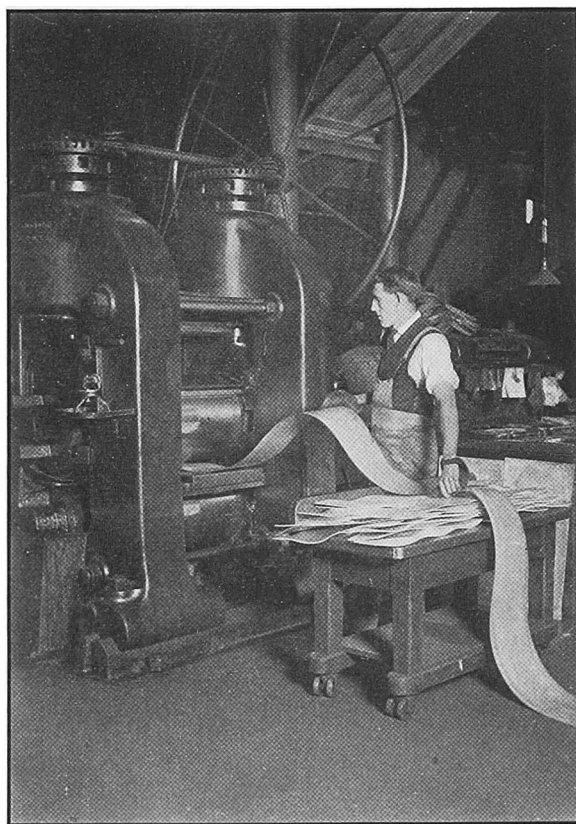
THE INGOT AFTER MELTING AND ABOUT TO BE COOLED  
FOR FIRST ROLLING

inspection, and decision as to the actual selling value of the design, its artistic excellence, and general practicability for reproduction in quantities. These necessary points once determined, the dies are hardened, and the one hundred or more needed for the completion of an entire set of individual and serving pieces—from salt spoon to soup ladle—are then created. The complete set of flatware contains from one thousand to fifteen hundred separate pieces, and therefore this number of dies must be cut in order to complete the assortment. This one step alone involves an expenditure of thousands of dollars before a single piece of the flat table silver can be struck and put on the market.

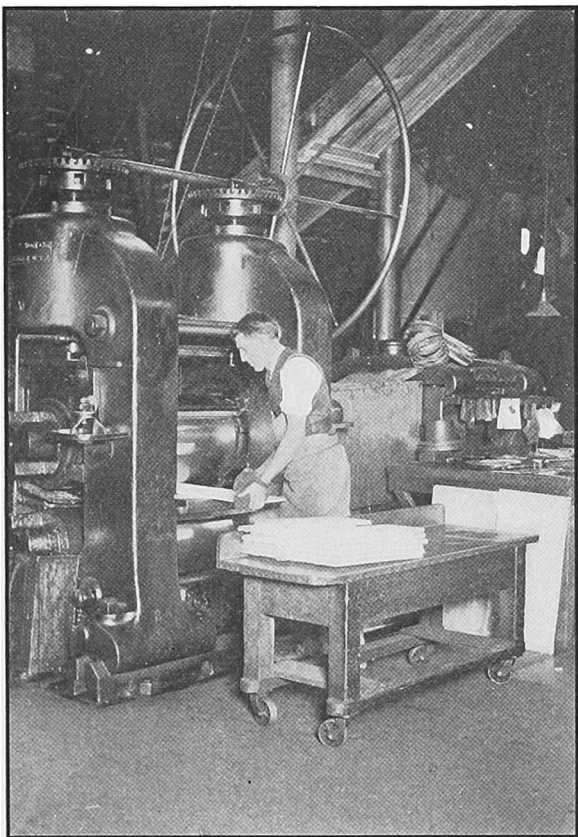
In addition to the dies, cutters must also be made. Similar to the dies, these are also cut in steel. Differing, however, in the fact that they are merely the outline of the several pieces, they might appropriately be compared to our familiar kitchen dough-

nut or cookie cutters. By means of these mechanical cutters a great deal of final superfluous filing and hand finishing is eliminated—with added beauty rather than less.

It takes a two hundred and fifty pound to a four hundred pound hammer, with a fall of about five feet, to strike the ordinary teaspoon. So accurately are these dies and cutters adjusted, and so carefully “bedded,” that it takes but two blows to complete the process, and bring up the design almost to its full extent and beauty. A similar process is employed with the cutter. The complete blank is thus produced, but the spoon, fork or knife is still, however, as flat as a piece of cardboard. Much hand work must now be added in actually shaping the bowl, the



THE FINAL ROLLING OF THE INGOT. THE SILVER NOW  
READY TO BE ANNEALED AND GO TO THE HAMMERER



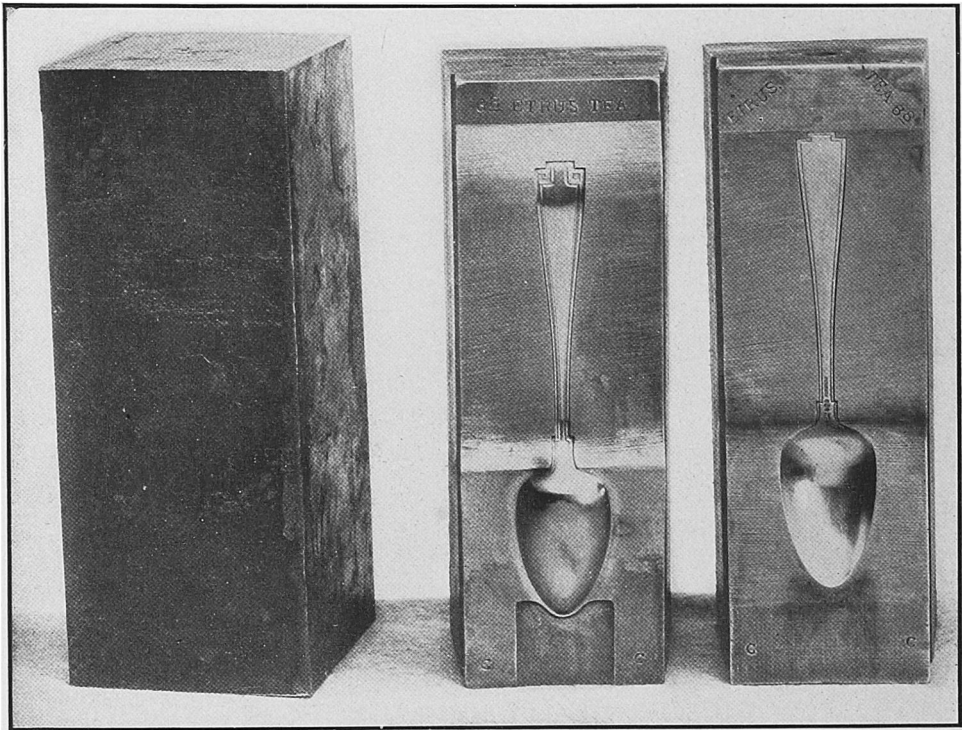
THE INGOT ENTERING THE ROLLER FOR THE FIRST TIME

shank, and the handle. In the case of exceptionally finely wrought pieces, many more hours of hand work must be included in order to properly “draw up” and bring out the final artistic excellence of every tiny detail in the picture pattern.

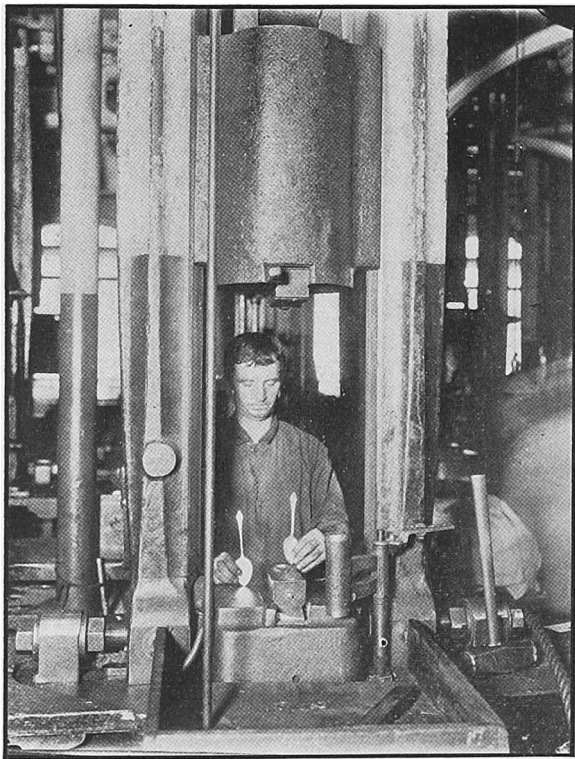
Pickling, polishing, and finishing now follows, then the individual engraving, with wrapping, boxing, and shipping before the piece is finally ready to be sent to our fortunate American bride.

In the specific case of the teaspoon, all of this study, labor and loving craftsmanship goes into the converting of a single ounce of silver which costs today in the American market about eighty cents per ounce. This same ounce of silver is ultimately delivered to our critical and exacting public at the rate, in the practical, finished product, of only one hundred cents per ounce—an increase of twenty cents for the designing, the craftsmanship, the shipping, the selling, and final delivery. It has been fairly estimated that if but one teaspoon were made

STEEL  
BLOCK  
BEFORE  
DESIGN  
IS CUT



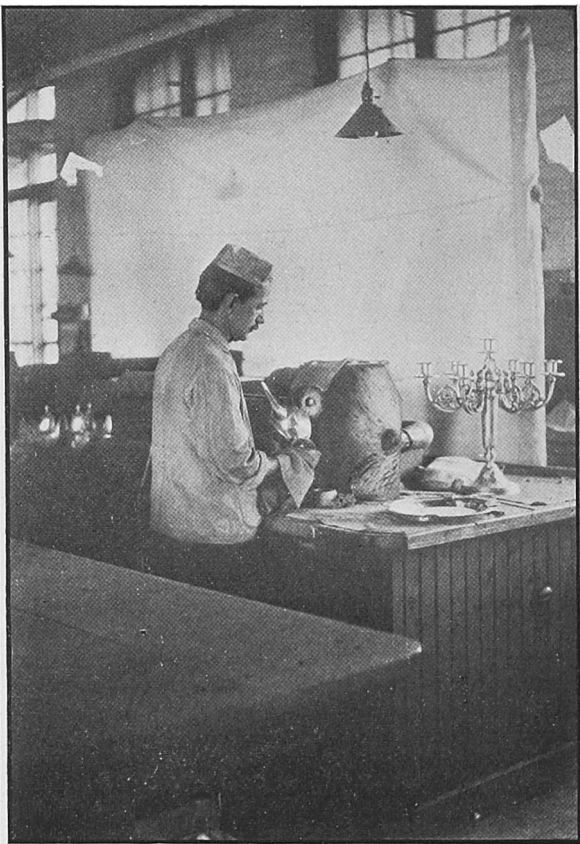
OBVERSE  
AND  
REVERSE  
AFTER  
DESIGN  
IS CUT



THE HAMMER MAN AT WORK SHOWING THE FLAT  
"BLANK" AND THE SPOON AFTER THE BLOW

and sold, irrespective of the value of the artistic endeavor that goes into the production, that which really sells for one dollar, or one dollar and twenty-five cents, would cost—valued in pure material and mechanical workmanship—close to a thousand dollars. A dozen teaspoons honestly valued at one thousand dollars—and sold for one dollar each! If this fact were more generally known it would doubtless add much to the appreciation of our common table

flatware. Only because so many of our American children are born with a silver spoon in their mouths, die with one not very far away, and use one all the time in intervening life, is it at all possible to produce and sell this intrinsically valuable article at a price which is astonishingly so slightly above the cost of the raw material.



POLISHING AND FINISHING